TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

Strategic Priorities for a Progressive and Inclusive Future

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A WIN FOR ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vision Statement

> To create an equitable, inclusive and innovative education system in Sri Lanka that empowers all learners to achieve their full potential, preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century, while contributing to national development and global competitiveness.

Sri Lanka's education system stands at a critical juncture. While the country has made significant strides in improving literacy and school attendance rates, substantial challenges remain in ensuring quality, equity and relevance in education. Addressing these challenges require comprehensive reforms that modernize curricula, enhance teacher training, integrate technology and bridge the educational divide. By doing so, Sri Lanka can build a robust education system that not only meets the needs of its citizens but also positions the country as a competitive player on the global stage.

The ongoing economic crisis has exacerbated the challenges faced by the education sector, due to low investment in education and the neglect of quality development. We will prioritize human capital development and will invest about 3 percent of GDP in the medium term, aiming towards a transformative change.

The transformation of Sri Lanka's education system is imperative to ensure that students are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century and contribute effectively to national development and global competitiveness.

Sri Lanka has historically prioritized education, achieving commendable literacy rates, gender parity and healthy school attendance. However, the current education system faces significant challenges, including disparities in quality and access, a focus on teacher-centeredness rather than student-centeredness, an overemphasis on examinations, inadequate teacher training and the need for curriculum reforms to align with modern global standards.

Proposed Reforms

Sri Lanka's education system is at a pivotal point, requiring comprehensive reforms to address existing challenges and align with future demands. The proposed reforms are structured to ensure quality, equity and relevance across all levels of education, from early childhood to tertiary education. These reforms draw on successful strategies from international education policies and are tailored to the local context.

Early Childhood Education:

- **Establish an ECE Regulatory Authority:** Create an independent body with a multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee to oversee and streamline the registration and monitoring of ECE centers.
- **Upgrade ECE Infrastructure:** Equip ECE centers with modern, child-friendly facilities and provide financial support to disadvantaged areas with appropriate timelines and costing methods proposed for funding.
- **Enhance Teacher Training:** Mandate high-quality pre-service and in-service training for ECE teachers, with a focus on certification and quality assurance.
- **Parental Engagement:** Integrate parental education programs to support home-based ECE activities.

Primary and Secondary Education:

- **Revise Curricula:**
  Update the primary and secondary curricula to include elements suited for Generation Alpha and Beta, emphasizing critical thinking, creativity and problem-based learning.

- **Digital Integration:**
  Ensure all schools have high-speed internet, digital devices and trained teachers to support digital learning. For example, the cost of a smart classroom with internet facilities is Rs. 1.5 million and for 10,000 classrooms in the first phase, the total cost would be Rs. 15 billion.

- **Support for Special Needs:**
  Implement programs for students with special needs and ensure inclusive education practices.

- **Promote English and STEAM Education:**
  Prioritize English learning and integrate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) education across all grades.

- **Reform Examinations:**
  Restructure the Grade 5 Scholarship, GCE O'Level, and A'Level examinations to reduce stress and promote holistic assessment.

Teacher Development and Support:

- **Competitive Compensation:**
  Provide competitive salaries and long-term welfare measures for teachers to attract and retain high-quality educators. There is an urgent need to address long-standing salary anomalies and to increase wages of teachers and principals.

- **Continuous Professional Development:**
  Establish a National Teacher Academy to offer ongoing professional development and training in modern teaching methodologies.

- **Digital and AI Proficiency:**
  Ensure teachers are proficient in digital skills and familiar with new AI technologies.

Tertiary Education and Private Sector Involvement:

- **Enhance University Autonomy:**
  Guarantee academic freedom and institutional autonomy through appropriate legislation.

- **Quality Assurance:**
  Implement rigorous and independent quality assurance and accreditation systems for higher education institutions and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) programs.

- **Diversify Funding Models:**
  Introduce public-private partnerships, grants, endowments and alumni contributions to support tertiary education.

Institutional Strengthening:

- **Modernize NIE and EPD:**
  Upgrade the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Education Publications Department (EPD) to design globally relevant curricula and produce high-quality educational materials.

- **Revise the Education Act:**
  Update the existing legal framework to support modern educational demands and align with global standards.

Pandemic Response and Future Preparedness:

- **Address Learning Gaps:**
  Implement diagnostic tests and Academic Recovery Plans to mitigate learning losses from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Future-Ready Education:**
  Modernize the education system to cater to Generation Alpha and Beta, emphasizing skills needed for future job markets.
- **Mental Health Support:**
  Provide mental health and nutritional support programs for students affected by the pandemic.
- **School Healthcare System (ex: Vision and Dental Health):**
  Regular tests performed free of charge to all students for their oral health and vision problems.

Strategic Priorities

Short-Term (1 year)

1. Early Childhood Education

- Establish an ECE Regulatory Authority with an independent multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee.
- Streamline registration and monitoring of ECE Centers.
- Provide financial support for ECE Centers in disadvantaged areas.

2. Primary and Secondary Education

- Upgrade and refurbish primary classrooms to make them child-friendly and engaging.
- Institutionalize high-quality regular in-service teacher training, particularly for English medium teaching.
- Implement special programs for students with special needs.

3. Pandemic Response and Future Preparedness

- Implement diagnostic tests to identify and address learning gaps.
- Train teachers to manage and support students in post-pandemic classrooms.
- Provide mental health support and nutritional programs to mitigate the short-term impacts.

Medium-Term (1-5 years)

1. Curriculum and Learning Focus

- Update the primary and secondary curricula to include elements suited for Generation Alpha and Beta, promoting problem-based and collaborative learning.
- Prioritize and expand English education from Grade One upwards, ensuring availability of good books and materials.
- Integrate digital citizenship, coding and AI skills into the curriculum from an early age.

2. Teacher Development and Support

- Create a National Teacher Academy to incorporate professionalism into the teacher service.
- Reorganize and upgrade National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) to become degree-awarding institutions.
- Enhance pre-service and in-service teacher training, adopting globally relevant methodologies.

3. Institutional Strengthening

- Modernize the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Education Publications Department (EPD) to design globally relevant curricula and produce high-quality educational materials.
- Revise the Education Act to align with the demands of the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions focusing on new skills and technologies.
- Foster international partnerships, including participation in international assessment frameworks like PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS.

Long-Term (5+ years)

1. Comprehensive Systemic Reforms

- Transform the national curriculum to emphasize critical thinking, creativity and collaborative problem-solving.
- Empower and train teachers to adopt innovative instructional planning and design tools.
- Develop a strategic plan for integrating technology into the curriculum involving all stakeholders.

2. Advanced Digital Integration

- Expand good quality internet access island-wide using low-cost methods and affordable data packages.
- Equip all schools with necessary hardware such as personal computers, tablets and interactive smart boards.
- Promote project-based learning experiences that require students to apply technology skills collaboratively.

2. Sustainable Funding Models

- Introduce diversified funding models including public-private partnerships, grants, endowments, and alumni contributions to support tertiary education.
- Implement rigorous and independent quality assurance and accreditation systems for higher education institutions and TVET programs.

These reforms aim to transform Sri Lanka's education system into a robust, equitable, inclusive model that prepares students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. By adopting these comprehensive reforms, Sri Lanka can enhance educational outcomes, foster economic growth and position itself as a competitive player on the global stage.

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1.0 Overview of Current Challenges and the Sri Lankan Context

Historical Background and Achievements

Sri Lanka has a long-standing tradition of prioritizing education as a means of national development and social transformation. The country's policy of free education, instituted several decades ago, has earned it the reputation of having one of the highest literacy rates in South Asia, with an adult literacy rate of 92% (93% for males and 91% for females) and nearly 98% of five-year-olds attending primary school. However, despite these commendable achievements, significant disparities and challenges persist within the education system.

Key Challenges in the Current Education System

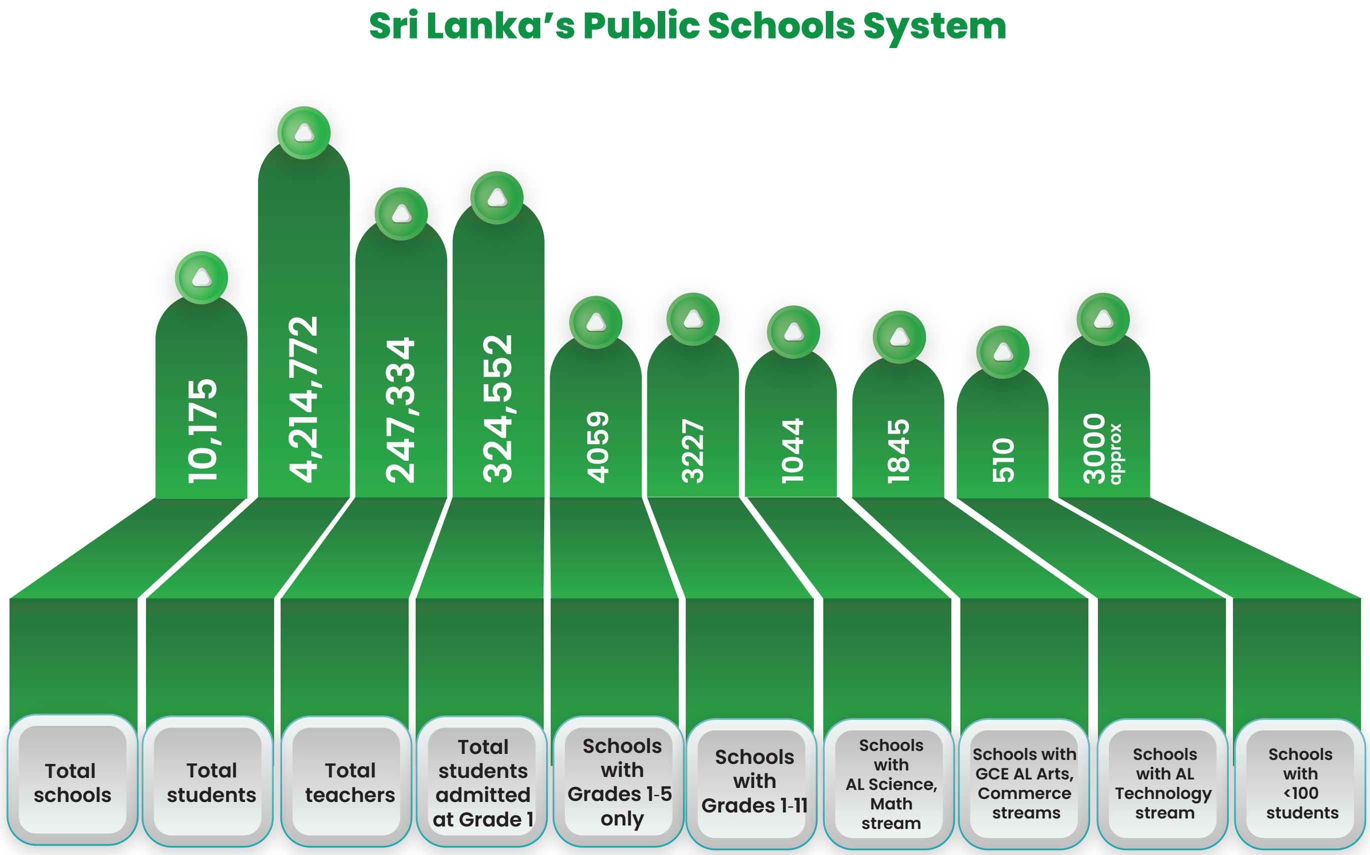

Table 1: Presidential Task Force Report on Reimagining Education (2019)

1. Quality and Relevance of Education

- According to a 2018 World Bank report, while Sri Lankan children generally complete 13 years of schooling, the effective learning equates to only 8.3 years due to the poor quality of education. This discrepancy highlights that the time spent in schools does not necessarily translate into actual learning, especially in rural and disadvantaged communities.

2. Impact of the Economic Crisis

- The ongoing economic crisis has exacerbated the challenges faced by the education sector. Students entering the workforce today lack the relevant education, skills and training needed to navigate a post-Covid society and a demanding economic environment. This situation has led to increased youth migration in search of better opportunities abroad.

3. Educational Disparities and Inequities

- There are stark disparities in the quality of education between urban and rural areas. Students from low-income families in rural regions often lack access to schools with modern facilities and high-quality teaching.
- During the pandemic, only 34.4% of households had internet connectivity and only 22% owned a computer or laptop . This digital divide left many students without access to quality education during school closures.

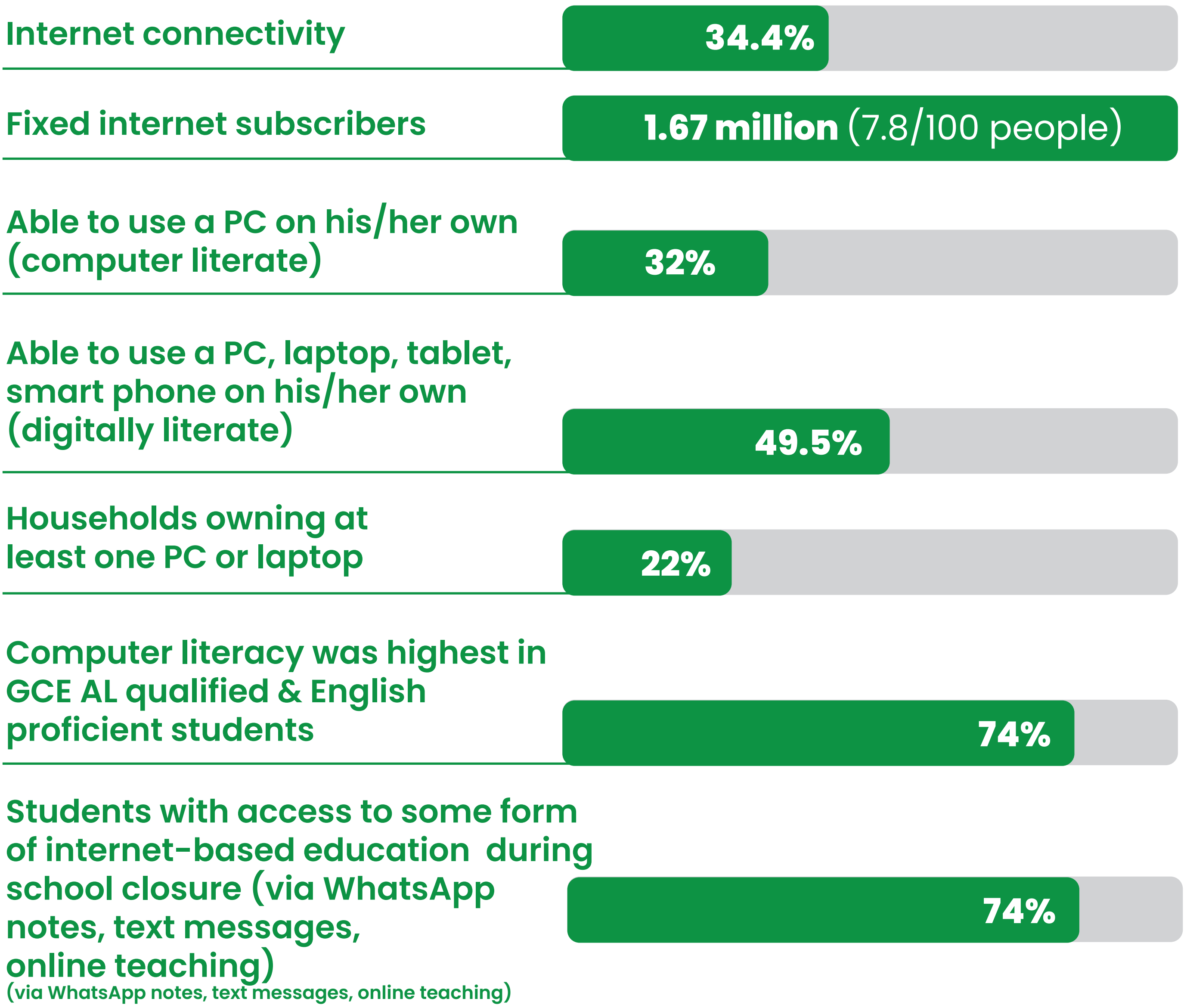

Table 2: Department of Census & Statistics computer literacy survey, using a nationally distributed sample of 12,870 households (5 – 69 years) 2020.

4. Pandemic-Induced Learning Losses

- The Covid-19 pandemic caused substantial disruptions in education, resulting in significant learning losses and psycho-social damage to students. Surveys indicate that only a small percentage of students had effective access to online learning platforms, with many relying on limited and sporadic internet access. Approximately 50% of students were left with no quality education during school closures.

5. Exam-Centric Education System

- The current education system in Sri Lanka is heavily exam-centric, with a strong focus on standardized test scores. This approach has led to rote-learning and memorization, rather than fostering critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving skills.

6. Teacher Recruitment and Training

- Despite efforts to establish an all-graduate cadre of teachers, Sri Lanka continues to struggle with recruiting qualified and trained educators. With 247,334 teachers serving 4,214,772 students across 10,175 schools (Public Schools,2019), the challenges remain significant. The current system still depends on a considerable proportion of under-qualified and untrained teachers, thus impacting the overall quality of education. As is standard in advanced education systems, no untrained teacher should be permitted to teach in class.

7. Decline in Government University Admissions and Rise of Private Institutions

- There has been a significant decline in student enrollments in Sri Lanka's government universities, with only about 15% of GCE AL exam takers gaining placements in 2021. This decrease is attributed to various factors, including campus violence, inadequate accommodations, outdated curricula and delays in graduating. Conversely, the private education sector is burgeoning, with nearly 75 private higher education institutions (HEIs) now surpassing the enrollment figures of public universities. These institutions vary from those registered with the Board of Investment or Registrar of Companies to those established through specific legislative acts, offering both local and foreign degree programs. However, the rapid growth of private HEIs underscores the necessity of maintaining rigorous academic standards and ensuring that the education provided translates into employable skills to safeguard the investments made into these institutions.

8. Academic Staff Shortages and Infrastructure Challenges in Universities

- Sri Lanka's higher education system is grappling with substantial academic staff shortages, with over 1,750 vacant positions, representing 22% of the total academic staff required, particularly acute in Medical and Engineering faculties. The shortage results from non-replacement of retirees and high resignation rates, exacerbated by recent tax legislation changes. This issue is compounded by an increasing student intake, leading to an overstretched system. The government's underinvestment in education, hampers the ability to attract quality academics, conduct high-end research and upgrade infrastructure. This underfunding not only fosters mismanagement and corruption but also severely restricts the universities' capability to improve and modernize their offerings.

9. Need for Governance and Regulatory Reform for University Oversight

- The governance of universities in Sri Lanka is in dire need of reform to foster a more liberal and transparent management structure. Current practices, which involve significant government interference in the appointment of key university positions such as Vice Chancellors and University Council members, undermine the autonomy and integrity of the institutions. To address these issues, the selection and appointment processes need to be overhauled to promote independence and meritocracy. Moreover, the Universities Act, which has remained unchanged for about 40 years, restricts innovative decision-making in university management. There is an urgent call for legislative revisions that empower universities, facilitate independent governance and ensure that education management aligns with contemporary global standards.

2.0 Strategic Priorities

2.1 Early Childhood and School Education

2.1.1 Early Childhood Education

A child's brain growth is fastest at 0-2 years and thereafter at 3-5. Formal Early Childhood Education (ECE) occurs in pre-schools and therefore requires special recognition. Upgrading, equipping and enhancing funding of the ECE system with coordination between Provincial and Central systems are essential. Encouragement of private sector ECE facilities is needed, along with mandatory high-quality pre-school teacher training with appropriate certification and established standards and quality assurance. An ECE Regulatory Authority should be established to develop guidelines and streamline the registration and monitoring of ECE Centers. ECE teachers should meet minimum training qualifications, and both pre-service and in-service training should be facilitated by the Regulatory Authority via reputed institutes. Parental education programs should be integral to ECE programs to promote home-based activities. Financial support from the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) is necessary for ECE Centers in vulnerable areas. Furthermore, pre-school classrooms should be modern and child-friendly and partnerships with various organizations should be solicited to enhance and fast-track ECE development nationwide.

Key Recommendations:

- Establish an ECE Regulatory Authority with an independent, multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee.
- Define and enforce minimum training qualifications for ECE teachers.
- Implement pre-service and in-service teacher training and performance monitoring.
- Provide financial support for ECE Centers in disadvantaged areas.
- Solicit partnerships with CSOs, NGOs, INGOs, the corporate sector and bilateral/UN organizations for ECE development.
- Streamline registration and monitoring of ECE Centers.
- Facilitate teacher training via reputed institutes across various sectors.
- Integrate parental education programs into ECE initiatives.
- Ensure preschool classrooms are modern and child-friendly.

2.1.2 Primary School Education

Upgrading and refurbishing primary classrooms in about 5,500 schools to create child-friendly environments is essential for making learning enjoyable and engaging for young children. The primary curriculum, which has remained unchanged since 1998, needs to be updated to include new elements suited for Generation Alpha and Generation Beta. Emphasis should be placed on learning to learn and problem-based learning through projects and collaborative exercises to develop essential learning competencies. English learning should be prioritized for all students, with English medium instruction available upon request, while ensuring that learning both Sinhala and Tamil is mandatory. High-quality, regular in-service teacher training should be institutionalized, particularly for those teaching in English medium. Teaching should focus on principles like learning through play and activity-based methods rather than being exam-centered. Core competencies in math, language, science, digital learning and environment, along with co-curricular activities such as art, music, drama, and physical activity, should be prioritized. The teacher-student ratio should remain at 1:35 and special programs for students with special needs should be implemented. Basic digital learning skills should be introduced with public-private partnerships to provide facilities like tablets with low-cost data packages. The Grade 5 Scholarship exam should be restructured to focus on simple IQ-based questions to reduce stress on students.

Key Recommendations:

- Upgrade and refurbish primary classrooms to make them child-friendly and engaging. With appropriate timing and costing.
- Prioritize English learning for all students, with options for English medium instruction, while mandating learning both Sinhala and Tamil.
- Focus on teaching principles such as learning through play and activity-based methods.
- Maintain a teacher-student ratio of 1:35.
- Introduce basic digital learning skills and provide facilities like tablets with low-cost data packages through public-private partnerships.
- Update the primary curriculum to include new elements suited for Generation Alpha and Beta, promoting problem-based and collaborative learning.
- Institutionalize high-quality, regular in-service teacher training, particularly for English medium teaching.
- Emphasize core competencies in math, language, science, digital learning, and environment, along with co-curricular activities.
- Implement special programs for students with special needs.
- Restructure the Grade 5 Scholarship exam to focus on simple IQ-based questions to reduce stress on students.

2.1.3 Secondary School Education

Secondary education reforms are critical for equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge for higher education and the workforce. Junior secondary classes (Grades 6-9) should include a comprehensive curriculum covering subjects like Language (Mother Tongue), English, Math, Science, ICT, Technology-based subjects, History, Value Education & Life Competencies, Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning, Comparative Religions, Aesthetics, Health and Nutrition, and Climate Sciences/Environment. Special emphasis should be given to sexual and reproductive health education using advanced models. Instruction should incorporate novel pedagogical methods, such as problem-based learning, project-based studies, and collaborative approaches, with facilities to innovate in design and tech-based activities, including robotics, and design. Co-curricular activities like Art, Music, Drama, and Sports should be integrated into daily timetables, with interactive and student-centered teaching. Senior secondary education (Grades 10-13) should focus on a flexible curriculum allowing students to choose from a broader range of subjects. Digital learning should be incorporated to empower students to use global information sources. Addressing the issue of school dropouts after Grade 11 by expanding GCE A'Level classes and supporting vocational/technical courses is essential. The current GCE A'Level exam structure should be revised to broaden critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills rather than rote learning.

Key Recommendations:

- Junior Secondary Curriculum: Include comprehensive subjects such as Language, Math, Science, ICT, Technology-based subjects, and Value Education.
- Tech-based Activities: Facilitate innovation in design, robotics, use of Augmented Reality /Virtual Reality , and other tech-based activities should be promoted.
- Interactive Teaching: Ensure teaching is student-centered and interactive.
- Digital Learning: Incorporate digital learning in all subjects.
- Revise GCE A Level Exam Structure: Focus on critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills rather than rote learning.
- Pedagogical Methods: Use problem-based learning, project-based learning, and collaborative approaches.
- Co-curricular Activities: Integrate Art, Music, Drama, and Sports into daily schedules.
- Flexible Senior Secondary Curriculum: Allow students to choose from a broader range of subjects.
- Expand GCE A'Level Classes: There will be compulsory 13 years of Primary and secondary education. ALL students who complete the GCE O'Level should have opportunities to access GCE A'Level classes, in all disciplines, as well as access to high quality vocational or technical education.

2.2 Curriculum and Learning Focus

2.2.1 Focusing on STEAM & English

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) education is essential in the current global education landscape. Integrating these disciplines with English teaching across all grades will better equip students for future employment and self-employment opportunities. However, only about 10% of Sri Lankan schools offer GCE A'Level Science, Math, and tech-related subjects, leading to low student applications for Science-Math-IT related specializations in universities and higher education institutes. Enhancing STEAM education and English proficiency will improve students' employability in sectors like IT, software development, industry, and manufacturing. The fast development of AI, IoT, data science, machine learning, and robotics further underscores the need for these skills. Also there will be special emphasis on expanding the Climate Science curriculum, to include Biodiversity and environmental protection and climate resilience. All schools should be equipped with the necessary infrastructure and trained teachers for STEAM education.

English education should be prioritized, and introduced and expanded from Grade One onwards, with a focus on high-quality teacher training and availability of good learning materials, and digitally-enabled English teaching. Teacher-training to teach English (reading, writing, speaking, listening) inside the classroom will be priority. The National Colleges of Education, Regional English Support Centres, and other institutions will should collaborate with the Ministry of Education to ensure the widespread availability of English education. Providing English medium education options to all schools and all classes, and ensuring regular, high-quality teacher training at the Zonal level across all nine provinces are crucial steps. Inviting support from international agencies and overseas partners to mainstream English proficiency in all schools will be a key priority.

Key Recommendations:

- Equip all schools with infrastructure and human resources needed for STEAM-based teaching, including good quality science, digital, and IT labs, trained teachers, and high-quality textbooks and learning material.
- Fast-track English teacher training at all grades and ensure uniformity in the varieties of English taught, with standard Sri Lankan English being the national norm.
- Offer English medium education to any student who wishes, at any grade, ensuring adequate trained teachers and good quality books.
- Prioritize and expand English education from Grade One upwards, ensuring availability of good books and materials.
- Collaborate with the National Colleges of Education, Regional English Support Centres, and other English teaching institutions to expand English education availability.
- Provide resources for regular and high-quality teacher training at the Zonal level in all nine provinces.

2.2.2 Digital Learning, Technology & AI in Education

Digital learning and the integration of technology into education are crucial for preparing students for the future. Post-COVID-19, digital learning has emerged as a critical frontier in education, driving sector-wide changes and improving access to quality learning opportunities. For Sri Lankan students to keep pace with global advancements, major investments are needed to ensure that all schools have high-speed internet connectivity and the necessary hardware, such as personal computers, tablets, and interactive smart boards. Training programs should be provided to familiarize teachers with the latest technology tools and software. Digital literacy, including coding and AI skills, should be incorporated into the curriculum from an early age. By introducing AI and machine learning concepts, students can develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The role of teachers and students should shift from being mere beneficiaries to co-designers and champions of digital learning solutions. This approach will ensure that digital learning is not just a top-down initiative but a collaborative effort that can transform Sri Lanka into an innovative Education-Technological hub in Asia.

Key Recommendations:

- Expand good quality internet access island-wide using low-cost methods and affordable data packages.
- Provide extensive training programs for teachers on the latest technology tools and software.
- Introduce AI and machine learning concepts in primary and secondary education.
- Develop a strategic plan for integrating technology into the curriculum, involving all stakeholders.
- Regularly assess the impact of technology integration on student learning outcomes and teacher effectiveness.
- Equip all schools with necessary hardware such as personal computers, tablets, and interactive smart boards.
- Include digital citizenship, coding, and AI skills in the curriculum from an early age.
- Foster partnerships between public and private sectors to support digital learning initiatives.
- Promote project-based learning experiences that require students to apply technology skills collaboratively.

	Percentage or number	Comments
Schools with internet access	~ 30%	Not broadband, high speed internet or data packages
Schools with ICT labs	5700	Out of all schools (10, 100)
Schools with NO data or mobile signals to connect	2500	Out of all schools (10,100) Some schools are provided with simple devices
Schools with low-cost data packages	5200	
Dongles & laptops have been provided	schools (very rural) 200	
Schools with digital Panels, interactive smart boards, and dedicated connectivity	5%	

Table 3. Presidential Task Force Report Schools with internet and device/ computer access (2019)

2.2.3 Holistic and Value-Based Education

Often national development, and even human development, is equated with economic prosperity alone, implying that a developed or advanced society is one in which the material needs of its members are fully met. This fallacy fails to recognize the importance of a holistic value-based education that addresses the non-material and spiritual needs of both children and adults. These would inculcate mindfulness, empathy and respect for diversity and plurality, understanding of tradition and culture as evolving and inclusive. Humanities and values education ensures that the children are respectful of each other, non-violent and non-aggressive, respectful and tolerant of difference. They will become actively altruistic citizens within an overarching rights-based framework of education and living.

All levels of education, from primary to postgraduate, should, therefore, have a core element of humanities and value-based learning built-in, which will be mainstreamed throughout the curriculum. The Curricula of all Grades at school should necessarily include a core component which includes Values & Ethics Education with Integrity, Social Emotional Learning, and Inclusivity within Democratic Principles.

Religion will be taught in school with special emphasis on 'Comparative Religions', so that all students will be able to study and understand all common religions. This would contribute towards unity and peaceful co-existence amongst all communities.

2.3 Teacher Development and Support

2.3.1 Teachers & Teaching

The quality of education cannot improve without investing in good quality teachers. Despite advancements in technology and innovative teacher-student collaborations, the physical and in-person relationship between teachers and students remains irreplaceable. Ensuring a conducive environment for teachers to teach effectively is paramount. This includes providing competitive salary packages, long-term welfare measures, suitable accommodation, transportation assistance, sanitation, and other essential infrastructure. It's also crucial to restore respect, dignity, and professionalism within the teaching profession. Establishing academic and training qualifications, continuous teacher education, career development, and professional standards are essential. Introducing a new Evaluation and Appraisal Bureau for teacher performance evaluation, along with Key Performance Indicators (KPI), within a new 'closed service' or similar Teacher Service, will help maintain high standards. Creating a National Teacher Academy will further professionalize the teaching service. Additionally, the recruitment of an all-graduate cadre of teachers should be prioritized. The National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) should be reorganized and upgraded to become degree-awarding institutions. Pre-service and in-service teacher training must be enhanced, adopting globally relevant methodologies. Teachers should also be proficient in digital skills and English, and aware of new AI technologies and ethical considerations in education.

Key Recommendations:

- Appoint 125 coordination officers on individual choice, based on approximately 1 per 200 teachers, to represent the teachers on the official matters until a system is regulated.
- Provide competitive salary packages and long-term welfare measures for teachers.
- Provide free public transport for teachers.
- Introduce an Evaluation and Appraisal Bureau for teacher performance evaluation with KPIs.
- Prioritize the recruitment of an all-graduate cadre of teachers.
- Enhance pre-service and in-service teacher training, adopting globally relevant methodologies.
- Ensure teachers are proficient in digital skills and English, and aware of new AI technologies and ethical considerations in education.
- Appoint a human resource officer at the educational zonal level to address teacher concerns. Existing ISAs (In-service Advisors) and similar officers could serve this purpose in addition to their existing roles.
- Ensure suitable accommodation, sanitation, and other essential infrastructure.
- Establish academic and training qualifications, continuous teacher education, career development, and professional standards.
- Create a National Teacher Academy to incorporate professionalism into the teacher service.
- Reorganize and upgrade NCOEs to become degree-awarding institutions.

2.4 Examination and Assessment Reforms

2.4.1 Grade 5 Scholarship Examination

The Grade 5 Scholarship Examination has been a source of significant stress for young students. This examination, originally intended as a simple IQ-based test, now includes a second paper covering most of the Grade 3-5 syllabus, leading to heightened anxiety among students. The reliance on rote learning and supplementary tuition has overshadowed the primary education curriculum's focus on creativity, imagination, and activity-based learning. Immediate attention should be paid to restructuring this exam to alleviate the stress on ten-year-old students. The proposal is to replace the current two-paper system with a single IQ-based paper to reduce the mental burden on students and make learning more joyful.

Key Recommendations:

- Replace the two-paper system with one simpler IQ-based paper.
- Implement measures to alleviate stress and anxiety associated with the examination.
- Reduce the focus on rote learning and encourage activity-based learning and creativity.

2.4.2 GCE Ordinary Level (O'Level) Examination

Annually, about 300,000 students sit for the GCE O'Level examination, with approximately 100,000 dropping out of school afterward. The examination's relevance needs to be reassessed, as the current system pressures students and consumes significant resources. The Department of Examinations could test key subjects nationally, while other subjects could be evaluated through school-based assessments (SBA), reducing the stress of cramming and allowing for a more holistic assessment of student abilities.

Key Recommendations:

- Reevaluate the necessity of the GCE O'Level exam.
- Reduce student stress by shifting focus from cramming to holistic assessment.
- Introduce school-based assessments for non-core subjects.

2.4.3 GCE Advanced Level (A'Level) Examination

The GCE A'Level examination should be recognized as a terminal school-leaving qualification rather than a university entrance exam. Currently, only about 15% of students who qualify gain admission to universities, leading to a significant number seeking private education or employment. Decoupling this exam from university admissions would reduce the pressure on students and allow universities to set their own admission criteria, fostering a more comprehensive assessment system that includes aptitude tests and other evaluations.

Key Recommendations:

- Introduce alternative assessment methods to augment the present university entrance system.

2.4.4 Aligning with International assessment frameworks

Assessing Learning Outcomes, testing on Competencies & Skills, with less emphasis on factual and knowledge recall are recommended. For all examinations DoE should continuously develop Question Banks so that authentic questions can be used. Blended modes of assessments instead of pencil-paper tests only, and incorporating testing instruments that can assess students' creativity wherever possible are highly recommended. DoE should study overseas models, and also move towards participating in international assessments like PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) an initiative of the OECD, TIMSS (Trends in International Math & Science Study, an initiative of the International Association of Evaluation of Educational Achievement – IAEEA)) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading, Literacy Study) another initiative of IAEEA , so that Sri Lanka can introspectively assess how its students rank globally. Sri Lanka remains one country that's not included in any of the above international rankings.

2.5 School Infrastructure and Management

2.5.1 Enhancing School Facilities and Resources

Equipping all schools with basic necessities like running water, electricity, comfortable classrooms, and child-friendly furniture is essential. Good sanitary facilities for teachers and students are lacking in many rural schools, which needs urgent rectification. Provincial Councils should undertake this exercise using existing budgets and inviting partnerships with non-state actors. Instead of increasing the number of National Schools under the central Ministry, initiate rapid school development programs at the divisional level. Identify schools within each Education Division suitable for upgrading, targeting infrastructure development, including science and IT labs, computers, and internet connectivity.

Key Recommendations:

- Equip schools with running water, electricity, and comfortable, child-friendly classrooms.
- Develop schools at the divisional level rather than increasing National Schools.
- Upgrade infrastructure including science/IT labs and internet connectivity.

2.5.2 School-Based Management, Rationalization

Decentralizing decision-making and empowering school management committees (SMCs) are crucial for effective school management. Schools should be able to recruit suitable teachers, especially from the region, and provide incentives like accommodation and transport allowances. SMCs should be composed of principals, parents, teachers, and community leaders, taking decisions with transparency and accountability. Decentralized administrative and management matters to Zonal Education Directors should align with the 13th Amendment of the Constitution.

Key Recommendations:

- Empower SMCs for decentralized decision-making.
- Provide incentives for teachers, including accommodation and transport allowances.
- Implement school-based teacher recruitment, prioritizing local teachers.
- Maintain transparency and accountability in school governance.

2.6 Institutional Strengthening

2.6.1 Transforming National Educational Institutions

Upgrading key educational institutions is critical for improving the quality and effectiveness of Sri Lanka's education system. The National Institute of Education (NIE), the Examinations Department, and the Education Publications Department (EPD) play pivotal roles in this endeavor. The NIE should be modernized and its mandate revisited to ensure it can design curricula that meet global standards. This includes granting the NIE institutional autonomy to ensure academic excellence and maintaining high standards among staff. Partnerships with NIEs in other countries, such as Singapore, can add value to the existing system. Regular, high-quality teacher training programs should be spearheaded by the NIE throughout the year in collaboration with other organizations.

The EPD should also undergo modernization to develop partnerships with reputed local and international publishing houses for high-quality textbook and material production. These materials should be distributed freely among school children, offering multiple options for book selection to enhance the variety and quality of educational resources available.

Furthermore, the Examinations Department needs to be upgraded and staffed with officers equipped with high-level skills to implement a new National Assessments Framework. Regular interactions with counterparts in other countries and developing systems to upgrade examination and assessment methods are priorities. The Examinations Department, along with the Ministry of Education, should initiate discussions to enlist Sri Lankan students in international assessment frameworks like PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS, to benchmark and enhance the national education standards.

Additionally, the existing Education Act, enacted in 1939 and renamed in 1948, is outdated and requires revision to align with modern educational demands. New regulations must support the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions, focusing on new skills, technologies, and knowledge to suit evolving employment patterns both locally and globally. Implementing transformative policies necessitates a significant shift and strong political will to ensure these changes lead to substantial improvements in the education system.

Key Recommendations:

- Modernize the National Institute of Education (NIE): Revisit its mandate and grant institutional autonomy to design globally relevant curricula and conduct high-quality teacher training.
- Enhance the Examinations Department: Staff with skilled officers to implement the National Assessments Framework and upgrade examination systems through international collaboration.
- Foster International Partnerships: Engage with NIEs from other countries and include Sri Lankan students in international assessment frameworks like PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS.
- Upgrade the Education Publications Department (EPD): Develop partnerships with reputable publishing houses for producing and distributing high-quality textbooks and learning materials.
- Revise the Education Act: Update the legal framework to align with the demands of the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions, focusing on new skills and technologies.

2.6.2 Good quality schools in each Education Division

Instead of increasing the numbers of National Schools which come under the purview of the central Ministry, initiate rapid school development programs at divisional level. One proposal would be for Divisional education directors to identify 3-4 schools within each Education Division suitable for upgrading, and target these for infrastructure development of classrooms, buildings, water and sanitary facilities such as good toilets, and child-friendly furniture. Science/IT-labs, computers, electricity, telephone, TV, Internet connectivity through low-cost devices are essential. Another option would be the 'cluster-school' option described elsewhere in this document.

Teachers living in the same region, with requisite training should be invited to join these schools, through a school-based teacher recruitment policy. They should be provided with incentives like accommodation facilities and transport allowances. Books, teaching materials, digital-learning facilities and new tools that are needed to fast-track teaching-learning should be provided. There should be a transparent and open mechanism by which students are selected to such schools, together with a clear appeal process if there is a perceived grievance.

2.6.3 School classification & naming

Currently schools are classified as Type 1 AB (about 1000 schools having GCE A Level classes for Science, Math & IT), 1 C (about 1932 schools having GCE A' Level classes for Arts & Commerce), and Type 2 (all other schools with primary and secondary Grades). A total of about 2932 schools (out of 10,170) have Advanced Level Classes.

This classification is archaic and irrelevant, and should be replaced with a system that indicates if schools belong to Primary (Grades 1-5) or Secondary (Grades 6-13) categories. In addition, schools-naming should be revised so that ethnicity and religion aren't depicted. Example : Tamil/Sinhala schools and Buddhist/Christian/Islam schools should be re-named with alternatives. Accordingly, a new policy should be developed on admission of students of all communities to these schools and resources provided as needed.

2.6.4 School-based budget allocation

School-based budget allocation system is important so that each school will prepare an annual Budget as per projected plans inclusive of capital & recurrent expenditure. Provincial authorities can disburse funds to schools via Zonal Education Offices. Principals need training on budget preparation and tender procedures. Introduce a different School Categorization compatible with how overseas schools are categorized, i.e. primary /Junior secondary /Senior secondary (as opposed to existing archaic system : 1A 1AB etc.). Avoid naming schools using ethnic, religious affiliations.

2.6.5 International Schools

International Schools are currently registered as companies with the BOI or other entities. All private, fee-levying primary and secondary education institutions should register with the MoE and be subject to periodic review and quality assurance according to given criteria. Before approving new private and International schools, these criteria need to be defined and this system should be regularized, inclusive of periodic quality checks and standards assured.

2.7 Reforming the Tertiary Education system

2.7.1 Universities Act

State universities should be funded better with higher budgetary allocations than now. They should be encouraged to become world-class universities offering excellent academic courses attracting local as well as overseas students. They should be conducting research of very high standard, and be comparable to respected global counterparts. Sri Lankan universities should eventually appear in high positions in global ranking systems. In order to achieve such academic and institutional excellence, amending the existing Universities Act or drafting a new Act could be considered, so that universities would function as independent institutions, with complete autonomy whose purpose is to reach academic & research excellence.

Vice Chancellors of the 17 existing universities should be academics of high caliber, and should be selected through a transparent and objective process, so that politicization of the VC selection methodology will be avoided. VCs and Deans should be incentivized and empowered to become competitive and to attract students locally and from overseas. Each university should develop plans to expand academic outreach, enter into partnerships with the industry, corporate and other sectors, team up with diaspora in relevant specialties and generate funds in a transparent manner, and as appropriate to their vision and mission.

Since free and accessible, public higher education is a core value of this country, care should be taken to ensure that changes envisaged do not jeopardize this principle. The practice that created generations of top quality professionals, creative artists, administrators and other graduates who have been the backbone of this society since independence, bear testimony to the value of a public higher education system which has been of high quality and largely free.

2.7.2 University Grants Commission

The mandate of the University Grants Commission should be re-examined, in view of a new or amended Universities Act, within which full autonomy will be granted to universities. The UGC should consist of professionals of high caliber, who are independent and non-political, and its mandate should be revisited and revised appropriately.

2.7.3 Zero-Tolerance towards ragging & violence in universities:

The ‘Prohibition of Ragging and other forms of Violence in Educational Institutions’ ACT (1998) should be enacted fully, with no discrimination. Ragging and violence have left several students maimed and few have died, during the past decades. Ragging, bullying and violence in universities have become one major reason for school leavers’ reluctance to apply for state universities. Several students have left university after gaining admission with difficulty, again for the same reasons. The policy of ‘zero tolerance’ for violence and ragging in universities should be implemented free of discrimination.

2.7.4 Private Higher Education Provisions

Sri Lanka is perhaps the only country in Asia, where reputed international private universities are not part of the higher education system. Annually about LKR 6-8 Billion is spent by Sri Lankan students for seeking university degrees overseas. Most of such students don’t return to Sri Lanka after their undergraduate and postgraduate studies, thus further depriving the country of educated and skilled human resources. This trend has become worse with the acceleration of migration since the economic crisis of 2021-2022. Establishing high quality international universities and HEI will prevent student migration and also the drain of financial resources from the country. Establishing high quality tertiary education institutions should cater to Sri Lankan students as well as a quota of international students. This would be a stepping stone to Sri Lanka becoming an International Education Hub like some South East Asian countries.

Earlier the Institute of Engineers Sri Lanka Provided high caliber engineers through their system like in the Engineering Council in the UK. This stream was closed down and many capable students just missed this golden opportunity. IESL should be requested to recommence this scheme as many in the industry are waiting for this.

A set of guidelines and criteria for establishing degree-awarding international universities, either as separate entities or as partners of existing universities and HEI, were drafted some years ago. This initiative should be revived and elements incorporated into the new Universities Act, as appropriate. The existing Quality Assurance and Accreditation system should be responsible for the assurance of standards and quality of every university – public or private, and legislation incorporated as necessary.
requirement.

Technical and Vocational Education	Number or percentage
Students sitting GCE Advance Level annually (on average)	250,000
Students qualifying for university education (on average)	162, 500 (65%)
Students gaining admission to 16 state universities & five affiliated universities	~40,000 (25%)
Number of state-funded universities governed by UGC	16 + 5 affiliated universities
Students attending state funded universities (total)	~ 65,000
Number of private/fee-levying, degree-awarding higher education institutes (HEI)	75
Students attending above HEI (total)	~ 100,000
Students applying to technical & vocational education/training institutes (eg NAITA, VTA, Technical Colleges, Colleges of Technology etc) annually	~ 124,000

Source: UGC & TVEC websites

2.7.5 Technical & Vocational Education Training (TVET)

These institutions are meant for those who leave school after GCE O'L or GCE A'L, and cover a broad spectrum of disciplines, from craft level skills development, vocational training and technical education, up to undergraduate and postgraduate level university education. Existing Parliamentary Acts which cover the above include the Universities Act No 16 of 1978 and the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act of 1990.

About 124,000 students annually apply to TVET institutions like NAITA, VTA, Technical Colleges (38), Colleges of Technology (9), and other TVEC Registered Institutes under the provisions of the TVE Act. They undergo skills training in a variety of disciplines and are usually highly employable. Students from these institutions should be allowed lateral entry into universities and HEI appropriately, with the agreement of the universities concerned. They will then earn a degree over and above their skills training, thus adding value to their education. This is a common practice overseas. All TVET institutions should be better funded, upgraded and modernized, in keeping with current trends, and newer job markets.

Well-performing Colleges of Technology and other Institutes such as the National Institute of Technical Education (NITESL), University of Vocational Technology (UNIVOTEC), National Institute of Fisheries and Nautical Engineering (NIFNE) now Oceans University of Sri Lanka (OCUSL), Kothalawela Defense University (KDU) should be upgraded and better equipped with human and other resources.

Another mode of Tertiary Education and Training is the Apprenticeship mode delivery, which has been in existence for decades. Formerly known as the National Apprenticeship Board (NAB) it is now referred to as the National Apprenticeship and Training Authority (NAITA). The Institute of Engineering Technology (IET) is also a valuable institution which trains technicians. The academic structure of TVET is covered by the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) framework and is attached to the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF). All these should be governed for Quality Assurance by the National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (NQAAC) which is appropriately positioned.

2.7.6 Gaps in skilled workforce

Sri Lanka has gaps in the semi-skilled and skilled work force needed to support current industrial trends, as well as is needed for a more economically advanced country. Many school leavers after GCE O'L and GCE A'L do not wish to pursue technical and vocational education except in commerce, accountancy, and management studies. The Technical Colleges and VTIs have many vacancies for students in areas like motor mechanics, electricians, AC technicians, plumbers, carpenters, masons etc. Perhaps the only exception is the Ceylon German Technical College (CGTI) at Katubedda where there are many applicants for a limited number of placements.

The main reasons for the above lack of uptake are the prospects available in middle eastern countries, and the opportunities to migrate to developed nations like Australia and Canada. The CGTI qualifications are recognized in many countries as high-quality programs. CGTI qualifications are benchmarked with German skill level qualifications and, therefore, there is a huge demand for these technicians in Sri Lanka as well as in foreign countries, where they can get well-paid employment. Sri Lanka needs to get NVQ qualifications benchmarked with European or Australian qualification frameworks.

Technologies change fast in the contemporary world and the Government Technical Colleges and the VTI curricula have largely become outdated. Teachers of these Colleges and Institutes need to be retrained and upskilled. The technicians passing out should be provided with opportunities to further their education at higher levels. UNIVOTECH provides some opportunities, but the number is very limited.

Another area where there is a huge skill gap is in hospitality management which includes patisserie, travel and tourism management, event management, commercial cookery, etc. The World Class T William Angliss Institute, Melbourne branch located at SLIIT, Malabe has a high demand, and diploma holders have high employment opportunities in star class hotels in Sri Lanka, the Middle East and Australia with high salaries. These Diploma holders can move up to the degree level in Australia if they so wish. If Sri Lanka wishes to be a tourist hub these skilled persons are an essential requirement.

2.7.7 Tertiary Education Quality Assurance

The National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council through the SLQF Framework has been in preparation for many years and should be enacted in Parliament soon, on the basis of a rigorous and open process. The essential focus of this legislation should be maintaining quality standards and facilitating lateral entry and interaction among Tertiary Education Institutes and the Industry, with careful attention to maintaining due standards, including checks and balances. All institutions responsible for Tertiary Education delivery (including state universities, HEI, Technical Colleges etc.) should fall within the purview of this framework so that the independent quality assurance of every institution is maintained.

Independence, academic freedom and autonomy of universities, HEI and all tertiary education delivery institutions should be guaranteed through appropriate legislation. Enrolment of students to individual institutions through specific, institution-based entrance tests, as opposed to the current centralized mechanism should be a prerequisite. Some of the newer and smaller universities may require institutional and other support until they are able to be fully autonomous, but even that should be their choice. Academic staff should be incentivized through financial and other perks, to engage in high-quality research, to enhance their own skill-sets and to add value to academia.

All forms of ragging, bullying, hazing, violence and student harassment in all universities, HEI and TVET institutes should be prohibited and legal measures taken against perpetrators.

2.7.8 Governance systems and funding

Funding of tertiary education in a low-income country like Sri Lanka, should factor-in that levying fees from disadvantaged students is not possible. Therefore it is important to consider alternative funding models, whilst prioritizing access to education.

- **Government funding** through significant allocation from the national budget to tertiary education. This could be used to cover operational costs, infrastructure development, academic and non academic staff salaries, and research initiatives. Prioritize education in the national development agenda to secure adequate financial resources, and re-purpose funds from other sectors that are of less economically important than education.
- **Grant-based funding** from international organizations, development agencies, and foundations that support education initiatives should be pursued. These grants can be used to fund scholarships, research projects, and infrastructure improvements.
- **Research funding** by the government and collaborations with industries and other agencies to attract research grants are essential. Encourage faculty and students to pursue research projects that address societal challenges and those which contribute to economic development.
- **Public-private partnerships,** which encourage collaborations between the government and private sector entities, such as corporations, foundations, and non-profit organizations. These partnerships can provide additional funding, resources, and technical/academic expertise to support development and sustainability of tertiary institutions.
- **Endowments and alumni contributions** from successful individuals who'd like to contribute to their alma maters. Culture of giving back to support the education of future generations needs to be encouraged.
- **Efficient resource management** strategies to optimize utilization of existing facilities, equipment, and human resources. This includes streamlining administrative processes, adopting cost-effective technologies, and reducing waste.

- **Scholarships, no/low-interest loans and financial aid** programs to ensure that talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds have equal access to higher education. This can be based on academic merit, financial need, or a combination of factors.
- **Robust Quality assurance mechanisms** are needed to ensure that tertiary institutions maintain high standards of education. Quality assurance and accreditation should be independent, with periodic evaluations, and student feedback systems incorporated.
- **Skills development partnerships,** collaborating with industries and vocational training institutions to offer technical and vocational education programs that align with the needs of the domestic job market. This helps create a skilled workforce and enhances employability.
- **Open educational resources** (OER) will reduce the cost of textbooks and learning materials. OER allows students to access high-quality educational content for free or at a reduced cost.

Implementing these strategies requires a supportive policy environment, political will, and a long-term commitment to investing in education. Prioritizing access to education and creating an inclusive system that supports students from diverse backgrounds are essential.

2.7.9 National Higher Education Commission

A National Higher Education Commission will be formed to oversee the performance of state universities, private universities, non-state and non-profit distributing universities, and vocational institutes.

2.8 Impact of the Pandemic and Future Preparedness

2.8.1 Education Beyond 2023: Serving Gen Alpha

Preparing for the future requires a significant shift in national policies, curricula, and teacher training to cater to the needs of Generation Alpha (those born between 2010-2024) and Generation Beta (born after 2025). By 2035, it is predicted that 30% of jobs will be new and unknown today, with 70% requiring skills in technology, digital literacy, and AI. To avoid falling behind, Sri Lanka must modernize its education system, emphasizing problem-based learning, skills development, and reducing the focus on exams. Introducing a new national curriculum that prioritizes critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving, alongside digital and technological skills, is essential. Empowering teachers to adopt innovative instructional planning tools will transform classrooms into vibrant learning spaces, reducing reliance on rote learning and supplementary tuition.

Key Recommendations:

- Modernize the national curriculum to emphasize critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving.
- Reduce the focus on exams and rote learning.
- Introduce digital and technological skills from an early age.
- Empower and train teachers to adopt innovative instructional planning and design tools.

High Quality Tertiary-level Education institutions that will specialize in ICT, Leadership and Management, will be established in all Provinces. They will be similar to the Indian models (eg, IIT, IIM) which are very popular and serve a large number of school leavers. Youth who are in the secondary school system may opt to directly apply to such institutions on leaving school.

2.8.2 New Jobs 2030 & Beyond

Studies from reputed international universities forecast that by about 2035 about 30% of the jobs that will be available globally, are those that are not even known today. In addition it is predicted that nearly 70% of all future jobs will need at least basic skill-sets that would support technology-based education & employment, Digital skills and skills in using artificial intelligence tools, with automation and design learning, amongst others. Unless national policies, school and university curricula, modernized infrastructure, resources, and teacher-training are geared in these directions Sri Lankan young people will lag even further behind, than now.

The future job market will be heavily influenced by advancements in technology, requiring new skill sets that are currently underrepresented in Sri Lankan education. Preparing students for these changes involves integrating automation, design learning, and AI into the curriculum. Skills such as mature critical thinking, structured problem solving, and logical reasoning should be emphasized. Additionally, developing interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, and management skills are crucial for holistic student development. A strategic approach to education that includes public-private partnerships and international collaborations will enable Sri Lanka to prepare its youth for the evolving job market and foster economic growth.

Key Recommendations:

- Integrate automation, design learning, and AI into the education curriculum.
- Develop interpersonal and self-efficacy skills in students.
- Emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and logical reasoning skills and more broadly 21st century skills.
- Foster public-private partnerships and international collaborations to enhance educational outcomes.

2.8.3 Diaspora Community

The Government should invite recognized educationists, economists, scientists, tech-experts and medical doctors of the diaspora community to serve in Sri Lanka’s education strategy development, resource provision, scientific advancement and in the implementation of policy. In addition, public private partnerships to expand and add value to school and tertiary level education should be promoted by the government.

3.0 Conclusion

Transforming Sri Lanka's education system is essential for ensuring that all students can thrive in a rapidly changing world. This paper outlines a comprehensive set of strategic priorities designed to address the critical areas of early childhood education, primary and secondary education, teacher training, digital integration, and inclusivity. By learning from the successful education policies of countries like India, Finland, and South Korea, Sri Lanka can adopt best practices and tailor them to local needs, fostering a robust and equitable education system.

The focus on early childhood education emphasizes the importance of a strong foundation, ensuring that young learners are well-prepared for future academic endeavors. Reforms in primary and secondary education will modernize curricula, enhance teacher training, and integrate technology to create engaging and effective learning environments. Tertiary education reforms aim to align with global standards and local needs, preparing graduates for the challenges of the 21st century. Improving teacher quality through rigorous training and continuous professional development is critical to the success of these reforms. Ensuring that teachers are proficient in digital literacy and familiar with new AI technologies will equip them to deliver high-quality education. Integrating technology into classrooms and the curriculum will prepare students for future challenges, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Inclusivity and equity are at the heart of these strategic priorities, ensuring that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background or abilities, have access to quality education. Special initiatives for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, along with comprehensive support systems for students with special needs, will help bridge the educational divide. Sustainable funding and supportive legislation are vital for the long-term success of these reforms. Developing progressive funding models and enacting laws that provide a stable framework for implementing educational reforms will ensure that resources are available to support these initiatives.

In conclusion, the strategic priorities outlined in this policy document provide a roadmap for transforming Sri Lanka's education system into one that is equitable, inclusive, and capable of meeting the demands of the 21st century. By adopting comprehensive reforms and targeted initiatives, Sri Lanka can create an education system that empowers all learners to achieve their full potential, contributing to national development and global competitiveness. The commitment of all stakeholders—government, educators, parents, and the private sector—is crucial to realizing this vision and ensuring a brighter future for all students in Sri Lanka.